

# ARGUMENT, PERSUASION, AND ANECDOTE: The Usefulness of History to Understanding Conflict

James J. Sadkovich

UDK: 32.019.5(497.1)  
323.14(497.1)  
321.013(497.1)  
Izvorni znanstveni rad  
Priljeno:8.12.2002.  
Prihvaćeno:20.12.2002.

I would like to begin by quoting Bill James, who has challenged the way we think about baseball, a game of intuition and individual effort whose fans and managers are obsessed with team performance and statistical analysis. "When I was young and naive," he recently told Tyler Kepner "I assumed that when you demonstrated that something was false, everybody would say, 'Oh, I didn't know that,' and stop doing what it was that had been demonstrated as being useless or counterproductive. Of course," he continued, "the world doesn't work like that."<sup>1</sup>

Not only does the world not work like that, history and the social sciences do not work like that. Unlike "normal science," these disciplines are fragmented into discrete paradigms whose members often speak a language intelligible only to those who inhabit the same textual universe.<sup>2</sup> The persistence of these paradigms precludes progress through paradigm shifts; and because even such commonly used terms as "terrorist" and "nation-state" change meaning according to who uses them, communication within and across these disciplines can be problematic.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bill James to Tyler Kepner, "Red Sox Have the Thinking Fan's Writer on Their Side," New York Times, 28 November, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), esp. pp. 10-21, for definitions of normal science and paradigms, and his observation that articles are written for other members of a profession, books for the general public.

<sup>3</sup> Writers on Yugoslavia's breakup have fallen into identifiable camps that can be traced in reviews of works published on the war, indices of collected works on Yugoslavia's breakup, and citations, e.g., Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country. Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991) cites Alex Dragnich, while among the works John Lampe, Dennison Rusinow, Gale Stokes, and Julie Mostov praise in "Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession," *Slavic Review* (Spring 1996), are those by Susan Woodward, Silber and Little, and Leonard Cohen. *Slavic Review* also published Robert M Hayden, "Nationalism in Former Yugoslavia," (1992) and Alex

The likelihood of progress is further decreased because we tend to blur the distinctions between different types of intellectual work, lumping journalists and diplomats with historians and social scientists.<sup>4</sup> We cite memoirs as if they were complete and accurate accounts, and some of us seem to think that politicians and diplomats tell the whole truth, even though they have little incentive to do so and a participant's version of events is always partial.<sup>5</sup> Many of us also seem prone to what a colleague calls the "American fallacy," the belief that recent works are inherently superior to previous studies simply because they are new; and we act as if a model or a theory must be true, or at least exceedingly useful, if it is current. Some historians writing as historians even feel compelled to reconstruct events as they should have occurred rather than understand them as they appear to have occurred.<sup>6</sup>

---

Dragnich, "The Anatomy of a Myth: Serbian Hegemony," (1991). Sabrina Ramet, "Anti-bibliography: Reviewing the Reviews," in *Balkan Babel. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Fall of Tito to the Fall of Milošević* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 2002), pp. 392B3, notes that Hayden interprets *This Time We Knew* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), edited by Thomas Cushman and Stjepan Meštrović, as anti-Serbian propaganda and then dismisses it. Splits among those writing on Yugoslavia resemble those among writers on Fascist Italy. Polemics between Denis Mack Smith and Renzo De Felice continue to echo in the literature, e.g., MacGregor Knox, *Hitler's Allies: Royal Armed Forces, Fascist Regime, and the War of 1940-1943* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), cites Brian Sullivan, Alan Cassels, and R. J. B. Bosworth, but ignores Emilio Faldella and Renzo DeFelice. R. J. B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998), p. 94-105, sees De Felice and "his circle" as advocates of a "blatantly new nationalist" historiography, not as careful scholars.

<sup>4</sup> For example, what some consider the standard work in English on Yugoslavia's breakup, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin/BBC Books, 1996), by Laura Silber and Allan Little, and a book that shaped attitudes in the early 1990s, Robert J. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts. A Journey through History* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), are both by journalists, as is the only book on Greek support for Serbia, Takis Michas, *Unholy Alliance* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2002). Noel Malcolm and Branka Magaš are scholars who work as journalists, as do Tim Judah, Marcus Tanner, and Misha Glenny. All have written influential books on Yugoslavia's demise.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Warren Zimmermann's memoirs, *Origins of a Catastrophe. Yugoslavia and its Destroyers. America's Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why* (New York: Time Books/Random House, 1996) is quoted as if he was a disinterested observer. For an assessment of memoirs, see Sabrina Ramet, "Views from Inside: Memoirs Concerning the Yugoslav Breakup and War," *Slavic Review* (Fall 2002). For propaganda and Yugoslavia, see James J. Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), pp. 78-162.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Reynolds M. Salerno, "Naval Strategy and the Origins of the Second World War in the Mediterranean, 1938" B1940, @ in William M. McBride, ed., *New Interpretations in Naval History* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998), pp. 170 B3, thinks "professional pessimism" shaped naval strategy and argues, like Williamson Murray, "The Role of Italy in British Strategy, 1938-1939," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* (1977), that the French and British should have launched a preemptive strike against Italy in September 1939, thereby making "World War II in Europe...far shorter and less destructive" than it was. Yet the British and French were too overextended to attack even a weak Italy. Salerno does not say whether such a preemptive strike would have violated international law.

But most historians, as Dušan Bilandžić has noted, study the past so they can say "it was like this and not like that." If his observation seems old-fashioned, it is because historians adopt an essentially empirical approach to reality which is detailed, rigorous, inclusive, focused, and exact; but also imprecise, eclectic, inconclusive, overarching, tentative, and usually forty to fifty years too late to be of immediate use.<sup>7</sup> Historians argue by selective example, a rhetorical device, not a scientific proof, and they fall into some of the same errors as journalists.<sup>8</sup> They stress detail and use concrete data, but they also assume generalizations, extrapolate from incomplete data, and employ ambiguous and evocative words.<sup>9</sup> Yet if historians work more like novelists, lawyers, and journalists than scientists, their stories are true, not fictional,<sup>10</sup> and they seek to understand the causes and consequences of human actions,<sup>11</sup> not to win a legal judgement.

Like social scientists, historians reconstruct reality, but they tend to be inclusive, not exclusive. They do not confine their studies to current events and they do not build models, although they regularly use them and some, like Fernand Braudel, like to float them down the stream of history and watch them sink.<sup>12</sup> To do history well requires both access to relevant sources and ample time to reflect upon them. It also requires an ability to argue by analogy, a methodical but skeptical and creative

<sup>7</sup> Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences," in *On History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 34, considered exclusion the worst error a historian could make. For some thoughtful considerations on what history is and should be, see the citations in the following notes and Barbara Tuchman, *Practicing History* (New York: Ballantine, 1981), Saul Friedländer, *History and Psychoanalysis. An Inquiry into the Possibilities and Limits of Psychohistory* (New York, 1976), Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (1992), Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (Boston, 1954), Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1967), and Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: Penguin, 1955, 1980). Fritz Stern, ed., *The Varieties of History from Voltaire to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1973), is a useful anthology, and Theodore Hamerow, *Reflections on History and Historians* (Madison, 1987), provides a critical look at the profession of history in the United States.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Elinor C. Sloan, *Bosnia and the New Collective Security* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), p. 14-15, whose phrase, "violence erupted in Croatia," suggests a natural disaster, not action by sentient beings.

<sup>9</sup> R. F. Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History. An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1978), pp. 5-6; Peter D. McClelland, *Causal Explanation and Model Building in History, Economics, and the New Economic History* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1975), pp. 78-9, 84-7, 96; and Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present* 83 (1979): 21.

<sup>10</sup> Elazar Weinryb, "If We Write Novels, So How Shall We Write History?" *Clio* 17 (1988): 265-9. While fiction is purely mimetic, history is epistemic, i.e., it uses correct information to represent reality accurately; it does not seek to create the illusion of reality.

<sup>11</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Vintage, 1953), p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences," pp. 35-7; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT University Press), p. 255. Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York, 1951), pp. 33B4, notes that historians incorporate the tools of the social sciences, but use them differently from the way social scientists do.

mind, and a good dose of intuition which will yield the bright ideas which provide the unifying concepts which tie together and make sense of the disparate data the historian has gathered.<sup>13</sup>

Because historical research, reflection, and flashes of insight are not group activities, Paolo Rossi concluded that history must be an individual pursuit and that competing programs are preferable to normative methodologies.<sup>14</sup> In other words, historians are lonely intellectual artisans who do not seek to establish general laws, but to study unique events.<sup>15</sup> Even carefully done history can generate only mid-level generalizations,<sup>16</sup> and precisely because it reminds us of the complexity of the world and underscores our tenuous grasp of reality, it seems a poor guide to action. So what could historians possibly have to offer this hard-nosed and self-consciously practical century, which appears to have placed an economic ideology grounded on one of the basest of human traits at the apex of human accomplishment?<sup>17</sup>

\* \* \*

Perhaps the historian's most useful contribution is cautionary, a reminder that reality *is* complex and that we can only know the past as a construct of the present. To paraphrase the media analysts David Paletz and Robert Entmann, by interpreting the past, we define the present and structure the future.<sup>18</sup> Historians strive to be rigorous and objective in a nineteenth-century sense, maintaining a distance from their data, yet letting the data lead them, unlike advocates who seek to persuade or entertain by selecting and shaping data to serve a purpose.<sup>19</sup> When done badly,

---

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (Chicago: Lyceum, 1989), pp. 248B9, and Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1905, 1979), p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time. The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. xi.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Wolman, *The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of History* (New York, 1971), pp. 79-80. History is idiographic, not nomothetic. This does not mean historians do not deal in the theoretical, e.g., Henry Buckle believed history to be a mental construct, something perceived by the mind, not discerned by the senses; cited in Stern, *The Varieties of History*, pp. 120B1, 136B7.

<sup>16</sup> Stone, "The Revival of Narrative," p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Capitalism and democracy, have distinct histories, refer to different human activities, and are not necessarily complementary. As Anatole Rappaport, *Fights, Games, and Debates* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p 186, mused, "Surely, some of the people at least some of the time find themselves in situations where they don't care to be bought." Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (New York: Penguin), esp. pp. 109, 117-120, 181, rejected simple greed in favor of enlightened self-interest, and he saw the division of labor, not democracy or capitalism, as having so greatly improved the productivity. "No society," he cautioned, "can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable."

<sup>18</sup> David L. Paletz and Robert M. Entmann, *Media, Power, Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), p. 22, note to publish is to interpret, to speak is to define, and to communicate is to structure reality.

<sup>19</sup> Niebuhr advised historians to avoid contemporary controversies, and Ranke advocated a "strict presentation of the facts," a careful use of sources, and an effort to find context

history becomes what Ivo Banac has dismissed as "false history"<sup>20</sup> and I have criticized as "bad history."<sup>21</sup> When done well, history is argument, the construction of a coherent, logical narrative derived from the relevant data, no matter how inconvenient to a working hypothesis.<sup>22</sup>

Advocacy, of course, can be well done; it is just not history.<sup>23</sup> The detailed and carefully argued indictment of Milošević by Cigar and Williams is superb advocacy,

and significance in an "exposition of the unity and progress of events." Stern, *Varieties of History*, pp. 48-58; also Pieter Geyl, *Encounters in History* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1977), p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Ivo Banac, "The Weight of False History," (Sarajevo: Forum Bosnae, 2002), pp. 201, believes "our understanding of the common and individual histories of South Slavs and other peoples of Southeastern Europe has not significantly benefitted from critical historiography, because histories have hewed to nationalist lines. John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History. Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. xvi, cites Andrej Mitrović's neologism, "parahistory," to describe a historical account that takes sides rather than explains. Ironically, Lampe appears to hew to a particular side in his history of Yugoslavia, e.g., on p. 106, he cites the "respected Sarajevo historian," Milorad Ekmečić as his source for the assertion that "popular opinion" favored the creation of Yugoslavia in 1918. But Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia. Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1984) details the political opposition to the new state and criticizes Ekmečić in "The Weight of False History," p. 200. While Lampe cites Ekmečić, Dimitrije Đorđević, Bogdan Krizman, Dragoslav Janković, Ljubinka Trgovčević, Gale Stokes, Ivo Lederer, Andre Mitrović, and Dragovan Šepić, on events between 1914 and 1918, he ignores Milada Paulova, *Jugoslavenski Odbor. Povijest jugoslavenske emigracije za svjetskog rata od 1914 do 1918* (Zagreb: Prosvjeta, 1925), whose detailed account of wartime diplomacy suggests less than consensus among the emigres. Certainly, there was little support for a state headed by a Serbian monarchy among non-Serbian emigrants in the United States where emigrants tended to be republicans; see James J. Sadkovich, "The Mobilization of Croatian Immigrant Opinion and the Croatian Press in America during World War I," *Journal of Croatian Studies* (1986).

<sup>21</sup> Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia*, chapters 6 and 7 for the role of bad history in shaping opinion and policy during Yugoslavia's dissolution, and MacGregor Knox, *Common Destiny. Dictatorship, Foreign Policy, and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (London: Cambridge, 2000), pp. 127-145, for an example of how too constraining a bright idea (a close similarity between Fascist and Nazi regimes) and too little acquaintance with the relevant literature (on Yugoslavia) leads to errors, e.g., listing Ante Pavelić and Gustav [sic] Košutić as leaders of a "Croat terrorist movement" who "promised vassalage to Italy" in 1929. For a more accurate report of this meeting, see James J. Sadkovich, "Opportunismo esitante: la decisione italiana di appoggiare il separatismo croato: 1927-1929," *Storia contemporanea* (1985).

<sup>22</sup> Rappaport, *Fights, Games, and Debates*, pp. 273-88, defines fights as aggression, a bludgeoning of one's opponent and an activity without rules, like propaganda. Games are contests with rules in which there can only be one winner, like a court trial; and debates are discussions in which each side tries to change or test the other's views. An argument is a logical, coherent discussion based on a comprehensive and disinterested examination of the pertinent evidence. Lawyers, politicians, diplomats, and other advocates debate. Journalists report, so tend toward anecdote and structured, stereotyped presentations of reality. Historians and social scientists tend to argue, although often within a particular paradigm.

<sup>23</sup> Some advocacy is so blunt, it can persuade only the faithful. Among works in this category are Alex N. Dragnich's pro-Serbian interpretations of interwar Yugoslavia and his polemic

but it is not history because it seeks not to understand Milošević, but to accuse him.<sup>24</sup> Hagiographic works, whether they glorify an individual or a military unit or a whole nation, like works that denigrate, are also advocacy literature. Much of the literature on Rommel, for example, falls into this category.<sup>25</sup>

Because historians cannot test their assumptions, their aim is verisimilitude, a careful reconstruction of the past that approximates truth. Because they can offer only incomplete and tentative reconstructions of the past, historians invite us to ponder the complexity of human motivation and human activity.<sup>26</sup> They also remind us to be skeptical of sources. Should we believe Izetbegović or Halilović?<sup>27</sup> Mesić or Tuđman?<sup>28</sup> Stewart or Blaskić?<sup>29</sup> Memoirs, of course, like works heavily dependent

---

on Serbs and Croats, *The First Yugoslavia. Search for a Viable Political System* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Pr., 1983), and *Serbs and Croats. The Struggle in Yugoslavia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992). For discussion of Dragnich, see James J. Sadkovich, "Objectivity and Bias: The First Yugoslavia, by Alex Dragnich," *Journal of Croatian Studies* (1986), and "Serbian Hegemony Revisited, or Blaming the Perpetrator, not the Victim," *Journal of Croatian Studies* (1993-94). Burg and Shoup have managed a more subtle form of advocacy; see Sadkovich, "The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention" by Steven C. Burg and Paul S. Shoup", *Review of International Affairs* (Autumn 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Norman Cigar and Paul Williams, *War Crimes and Individual Responsibility: A Prima Facie Case for the Indictment of Slobodan Milošević* (Washington DC: The Balkan Institute, 1996). Also Norman Cigar, *Vojislav Koštunica and Serbia's Future* (London: Saqi Books with The Bosnian Institute, 2001), and Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War. Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 1996), both useful works of advocacy and exposure. Much of my own writing on Yugoslavia in the 1990s was advocacy, as opposed to my earlier work on Yugoslav history.

<sup>25</sup> Revision is a careful historical reassessment of a myth or a legend carried by parahistory or false history or bad history, e.g. James J. Sadkovich, "Of Myths and Men: Rommel and the Italians in North Africa, 1940-1942," *International History Review* 13 (2) (May 1991): 284B313.

<sup>26</sup> Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, pp. 42, 47. Wolman, *Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, pp. 83-4, notes that historical theories are not empirically true or false, but must be internally consistent and consistent with the data. Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, pp. 50, 52, saw the past as alien, sources as presented facts in a pure form, and treatises as facts digested. In effect, history is an incomplete road map to a foreign territory largely forgotten.

<sup>27</sup> Sefer Halilović, *The Shrewd Strategy* (Sarajevo: Masal, 1997) and Alija Izetbegović, *Sjećanja: Autobiografski zapis* (Sarajevo: TKD Šahinpašić, 2001). For a discussion of both, see Ramet, "Views from Inside."

<sup>28</sup> See Stipe Mesić, *Kako je srušena Jugoslavija* (Zagreb: Mislav Press, 1994), 2nd edition. Both Mesić and Tuđman gave numerous interviews, but most writers have cited excerpts from Tuđman's historical writings to highlight some negative aspect of his character, e.g., Hayden, "Nationalism in Former Yugoslavia." If one were an advocate for Tuđman, rather than quoting unflattering excerpts from *Bespuća*, one might cite a 30 July 1999 article in *Večernji list* in which he urged the "dilettantes from The Hague" to remember that Croatia was the first state to recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina, that he and other Croat leaders had supported the creation of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and that Croatia had funneled arms to the



on a few sources, are inherently suspect, not only because their authors usually have reason to be less than candid, but also because memory alone is faulty.<sup>30</sup> Memories must be capable of being checked, so we should take all memoirs with a grain of salt, check them against documentary evidence, and write a narrative that does not offend logic.

If the compilation and critical examination of documents remains the surest way to reconstruct an unrecoverable past, it is worth bearing in mind that explanatory descriptions are relative to a given context.<sup>31</sup> What explains the war in Croatia does not necessarily explain the war in Bosnia. The two events, though linked, are as different as fraternal twins. However, during a conflict and in its immediate aftermath, we lack the luxury to wait for forty-year rules to expire, so we extrapolate from the sources we have and tend to credit sources we should suspect.

\* \* \*

In times of conflict, we also tend not to distinguish between scholarly history and history written for a purpose. But not to make this distinction is to accept legal arguments, journalism, and social science as history. Lawyers, journalists, and social scientists approach reality very differently from historians.<sup>32</sup> For example, as the tribunal at The Hague helps to reveal what happened during Yugoslavia's breakup,

---

Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatia, he insisted, had helped Bosnia-Herzegovina "to assure the autonomy and equality of the Croatian people...one of the oldest people in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the first to oppose Serbian aggression, when the Muslims had no idea of what was going on."

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps Blaškić, depending on the evidence in recently released documents not available when he was sentenced. Marlise Simons, "Archives Force Review of Croat's Atrocity Case," *New York Times*, 21 November 2002. Robert Stewart's published account of his experiences in Bosnia, *Broken Lives* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), should be compared to his diary, deposited with the tribunal at The Hague.

<sup>30</sup> Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History*, pp. 131-2. When writing *Italian Support for Croatian Separatism, 1927-1937* (New York: Garland, 1987), I found that diplomats differed in their accounts of the same events depending on where they were posted, and that there were considerable differences between archival documents, memories, and memoirs.

<sup>31</sup> T. Carlos Jacques, "The Primacy of Narrative in Historical Understanding," *Clio*, (1990), 19 (3): 207, sees historical evidence as part of the background (context) of the reality being described, making evidence an integral part of the internal relations of the events being described and internal relations the only reality we can know.

<sup>32</sup> For how journalists operate, the importance of beats and sources, the inculcation of values by news organizations, and the role of money, see Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980, 1990); Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News. A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Philip Gaunt, *Choosing the News. The Profit Factor in News Selection* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990); Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (NY: Pantheon, 1988); Norman Isaacs, *Untended Gates. The Mismanagement of the Press* (Columbia UP, 1986); and Gaye Tuchman, *Making News. A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).

it is also shaping our perception of those events.<sup>33</sup> By defining terms and selecting evidence, the prosecution is setting the historical agenda, much as Winston Churchill did by publishing the first comprehensive account of World War II and thereby forcing others to react to his version of events.<sup>34</sup>

Both sides at The Hague are engaged in advocacy, not in writing history. They are participants in a game which demands that they partake in a very serious and very formal debate, but a debate none the less.<sup>35</sup> Both sides call expert consultants who select and interpret evidence. But Robert Donia, Stefano Bianchini, Stjepan Meštrović, and other scholars who have testified at The Hague were not acting as historians or social scientists when they did so. They could not, because the rules of the game at The Hague preclude detailed historical and scientific arguments. Their training may have been scholarly, but at The Hague they were advocates, coached and questioned by the prosecution and the defense.<sup>36</sup>

When historians and social scientists argue within competing paradigms rather than across them, their arguments merely validate the assumptions of a particular view of reality.<sup>37</sup> They then are not very different from the prosecution and defense

---

<sup>33</sup> For the concept of news shapers, see Lawrence C. Soley, *The News Shapers. The Sources Who Explain the News* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1992). The tribunal was not established to write history, but to try those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, a precise and restricted legal mandate.

<sup>34</sup> The standard interpretation ( J. S. Mill's Tradition) is so powerful it resists even major revelations, e.g., the disclosure in 1974 that the British read Axis codes (Operation Ultra) has had relatively little impact on how we view World War II, partly because works written before 1974 continued to influence students, scholars, and the general public. For Churchill's impact on our view of World War II, see Noel Fieldhouse, "The Anglo-German War of 1939-1942: Some Movements to End It by a Negotiated Peace," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* (1971), p. 285. For stereotypes regarding the German and Italian militaries, see James J. Sadkovich, "German Military Incompetence through Italian Eyes," *War in History* (1994)," and "Italian Service Histories and Fascist Italy's War Effort," in Robin Higham, ed., *The Writing of Official Military History* (Greenwood, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers have no interest in understanding the events that convulsed the former Yugoslavia, nor are they curious about those who were involved. They are not concerned about what happened, save in particular, legally defined situations. Even then, neither side wants the other to know what might be inconvenient to its case or antithetical to its assumptions. That is the nature of a legal game and the precedent that the tribunal sets will be valuable for international law, but only one of many sources for the historian seeking to understand the Yugoslav wars.

<sup>36</sup> Journalists may also act as advocates. Their accounts may be accurate, but they are also incomplete, depend on hearsay and anecdote, and are usually written quickly. In the early 1990s, journalists, like most Western observers, depended on translators and local stringers, both of whom shaped their reporting, e.g., David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse. Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), appears sympathetic to Bosnians; Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia. The Third Balkan War* (New York: Penguin, 1992), seems antipathetic to Croats; and Mark Thompson, *A Paper House. The Ending of Yugoslavia* (London: Vintage, 1992), evidently admires Slovenes.

<sup>37</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, esp. pp. 182-7, 208-210, sees competing paradigms as normal for non-scientific disciplines; he thinks members of a scientific com-



teams at The Hague who react differently to the same stimuli because they hold what Kuhn calls "incommensurable viewpoints."<sup>38</sup> They become advocates for the assumptions of their respective paradigms, and the judges decide which paradigm is the most credible according to limited legal standards of evidence.

The distinction between advocacy and historical interpretation is an important one, and it seems to me crucial not only to be aware of competing paradigms within professions, but also to distinguish between historians working as historians and those working as advocates. For example, when we read Ivo Banac's study of competing political forces during the early years of the Yugoslav state, we are reading a first-rate work of history; when we read his interviews and articles on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, we are reading advocacy informed by a sense of history.<sup>39</sup> They are not the same thing.

\* \* \*

It is also important to distinguish analytic narrative from accounts which compress and conflate chronology and those which focus on an event without providing adequate context. We might call such works anecdotal history, because they privilege a discrete event in the same way journalists privilege anecdotes from a single source or homogenous group of sources, e.g., a government official or a gaggle of government officials. Anecdotes and individual testimony create the illusion of certainty, but the past, like the battlefield, is shrouded in mist and personal testimony is always subjective.<sup>40</sup>

Yet when we write about the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, we write with such certainty! For example, we know that civilians were killed at Stupni Do in October 1993, but the incident raises questions about the reliability of eye-witnesses, the risks of extrapolating after the fact, the need for careful chronology, and the difficulty of placing an event in context.<sup>41</sup> Reconstructing the events of October 1993 is not

---

munity share a "disciplinary matrix" which includes standard symbolic generalizations, belief in particular models, shared values, and exemplars (e.g., journal literature).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 199B202, notes that persuasion is not conversion, and observes that two people perceiving the same situation differently use the same words differently. This seems reasonable, given that even our dreams and sexuality seem to be societally conditioned; see Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp. 220-1, 229; and David M. Halperin, *Is There a History of Sexuality? History and Theory* (1989), pp. 273-4, who believes that even...what seem to be our most inward, authentic, and private experiences are actually..."shared, unnecessary/and political".

<sup>39</sup> Compare Banac's *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, a carefully researched and argued historical study, to his *Protiv straha. članci, izjave i javni nastupi, 1987-1992* (Zagreb: Slon, 1992) or his observations in Adil Zulfikarpašić, Vlado Gotovac, Miko Tripalo, and Ivo Banac, *Razgovor okovana bosnakovana* (Zurich: Bošnjački Institut, n.d.).

<sup>40</sup> For the fog of battle, friction, and discussions of military theory and Clausewitz, Jomini, et al., see Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton Univ. Pr., 1986), passim.

<sup>41</sup> It is unlikely that the release of new documents by Croatia regarding the roles played by Blaškić and Kordić will settle the matter because this is an event that happened at a tactical, not an operational or strategic level.

so much a matter of deciding who told the truth, as one of shifting and expanding our focus from the village of Stupni Do to the city of Vareš and the surrounding area, of which Stupni Do was a part.<sup>42</sup>

If we expand our spatial and temporal foci to include Vareš and its outlying villages, as well as events before and after the action at Stupni Do, what we discover is an isolated Croatian enclave whose prewar population had been 40 percent Croat, 30 percent Muslim, and 16 percent Serb. We also find several thousand Croats who had fled to Vareš from Kakanj in 1992, apparently under pressure from the ABH (Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina). We might also note Muslim refugees who had settled in areas designated as Croatian by the Vance-Owen Plan; a number of apparently uncontrolled military forces, both Croatian and Muslim; and three Bosnian army corps which converged on Vareš immediately after the incident in Stupni Do, ostensibly in retaliation for the massacre there, a stunning logistical achievement for such a large force, particularly in the mountains.<sup>43</sup>

The immediate background of the incident began on October 21, when Ivica Rajić and 500 men in an HVO unit from Kiseljak and Kakanj arrived in the area to parry an expected attack on the city by the ABH, which had already occupied several outlying villages, including Liješnici and Kopijara, where several civilians appear to have been murdered. On October 23, Rajić's men engaged elements of the ABH in Stupni Do, and the following day, ABH artillery began to shell Vareš.<sup>44</sup> Defended by a single brigade, the city was overrun a week later, a year after the fall of Jajce, an

---

<sup>42</sup> To paraphrase Kuhn, we need to shift the gestalt so we can see both the foreground and the background of the incident.

<sup>43</sup> The attack on Vareš had probably been prepared before the incident at Stupni Do. The ABH had assembled 10,000 soldiers in three army corps, II Tuzla, III Zenica, and IV Visoko, which had occupied or destroyed ten villages between 17 and 23 October. HVO forces in Vareš were too weak to hold the city and may have attacked Stupni Do to open an escape rout. Velimir Blazević, ed., *Katolička crkva i rat u Bosni i Hercegovini. Dokumenti o stavovima i zauzimanju katoličke crkve za mir i poštivanje ljudskih prava i građanskih sloboda i za očuvanje države Bosne i Hercegovine (1989-1996)* (Sarajevo, 1998), p. 253. In June, 1993, the Catholic Bishops Conference suggested that a major cause of hostilities between Croats and Muslims was the arrival of Muslim refugees in areas designated as Croatian under the Vance-Owen Plan. Bertrand de Rossanet, *War and Peace in the Former Yugoslavia* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997), p. 101, for *Uncontrolled elements operating on their own* in Central Bosnia in 1993. Mate Boban told Josip Jović, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1 Dec. 1993, that Stupni Do was the southeastern check point for Vareš. Noting that the ABH was more numerous and better armed than the HVO, Boban complained of a double standard that ignored Muslim crimes, saw Muslim attacks on the HVO as defensive, and defined Muslim atrocities as random but tied every action by HVO forces to HVO leaders. Boban insisted the ABH had turned on the HVO and chided Izetbegović and Rasim Delić for claiming the ABH had liberated Vareš from Ustaša hordes, rhetoric similar to Serbian declarations after they had reduced Vukovar to rubble.

<sup>44</sup> A local friar believed Croats had fled Vareš because they feared the ABH would exact revenge for crimes by the HVO in Stupni Do. But a Franciscan from the monastery at Kraljevska reported that the previous June, 12,000 Croats had fled Kakanj for Vareš, owing to harassment from elements of the ABH. See *Katolička crkva i rat u Bosni i Hercegovini*, pp. 256, 295-6.

event which coincided with the first serious clashes between the HVO and the ABH.<sup>45</sup> The action at Stupni Do therefore seems to have been part of a larger ABH offensive, leading Jasna Babić to label the killings in Kopijara as "Stupni Do before Stupni Do."<sup>46</sup>

Because Stupni Do was inaccessible until 27 October, investigators reconstructed events as well as they could.<sup>47</sup> The HVO claimed civilians were caught in a cross-fire because ABH forces did not evacuate them, and one Croatian soldier considered the civilian deaths inevitable, because during house-to-house fighting in the village both sides returned fire without seeing their enemy. What, he asked, can you do but kill the enemy when "your guys are dying."<sup>48</sup>

\* \* \*

Even this relatively brief description of events at Stupni Do should demonstrate that the denser the description, the harder it is to come to clear, simple conclusions about what happened. Conclusions are necessarily tentative, because the more detailed the narrative, the more difficult it is to identify necessary conditions and

<sup>45</sup> For Croatian accounts of war crimes by the ABH, see *Ratni zločini muslimanskih vojnih postrojbi nad Hrvatima Bosne i Hercegovine* (Sarajevo: CPD, 1997), p. 54, and Ivica Milvončić, *Zločin s pečatom. Genocid i ratni zločini muslimansko-bošnjačkih snaga nad Hrvatima BiH 1992.-1994.* (Zagreb: Targa, 1998), pp. 142-3. During the assault on Vareš, sixty Croats died and most fled. Those who stayed were detained in the local high school.

<sup>46</sup> Jasna Babić, *Globus*, 12 November 1993. Jadranko Prlić to Joško Dadić, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 12 January 1994, for Vareš. Željko Garmaz, *Globus*, 22 July 1994, reported conflicting accounts of the fighting at Stupni Do. The village straddled a strategic road, and the fighting there occurred after ABH attacks on Kopijara and Liješnica, and while HVO forces were under attack by three ABH army corps. The death of civilians at Stupni Do received considerable play in the media, according to Jasna Babić, because such an event was rare in areas controlled by Croats and Muslims. The fall of Vareš was largely ignored.

<sup>47</sup> The first observers entered the village four days after the incident, e.g., David B. Ottaway, *Washington Post*, 28 Oct. 1993. Prlić told Joško Dadić, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 12 January 1994, that the ABH had obstructed attempts to investigate the incident. The inability to investigate such sites is not unusual during wartime. Gutman could not visit the camp Manjača until after it was cleaned up, and the US military has severely restricted the access of reporters to combat zones. Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Douglas Kellner, *The Persian Gulf TV War* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992), and Loyd J. Matthews, *Newsmen and National Defense: Is Conflict Inevitable?* (Washington, DC: Brassey's Inc., 1991).

<sup>48</sup> Petar Zelenika to Ermin Krehić, *Novi Vjesnik*, 18 January 1993, for HVO claims that Serbs and elements of the 3rd ABH Corps were in Stupni Do. Mario Andrić in *Danas*, 18 January 1994, noted Stupni Do was the key to communications with Sokolac and became more important after the ABH had taken the villages of Ljesnica and Kopijara on 17B18 October. On 22 October, the HVO engaged the ABH in Stupni Do, but UNPROFOR troops apparently intervened. Mario Marušić, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 3 November 1993, reported the HVO claim that Stupni Do was defended by the ABH Dominik Ilijašević-Como told Nebojša Taraba of *Globus*, 15 September 1995, that the ABH deployed special forces in Stupni Do, but did not evacuate civilians, perhaps, he guessed, because they were convinced they could defend the village.

distinguish them from sufficient conditions.<sup>49</sup> Causal links depend on chronology, but chronology is hard to establish and its explanatory value depends on the extent to which it is both detailed and accurate. Chronology and causal relationships also must be expressed in words, but translating reality into language does not guarantee accuracy because it recasts real events as linguistic conventions.<sup>50</sup> So it is rather remarkable that historians can manage even mid-level generalizations.

\* \* \*

Both dense narrative and detailed chronology need extensive documentation, which we still lack regarding the events of the 1990s. But if difficult to determine, owing to the many points from which a historical event may be viewed, chronology is still the indispensable bed in which a historical narrative flows. This is clear if we consider the meeting between Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević at Karađorđevo in March 1991, a subject I undertake with some trepidation, both because I am not current on the latest revelations in the Croatian press and because there are people here who knew Tuđman well. But given the importance this meeting has assumed as a cause of the conflicts that convulsed Yugoslavia, it seems worthwhile to try, as a historian, to pose questions regarding the meeting and then to invite comments.

From the beginning, the encounter at Karađorđevo has been seen as conclusive evidence of collusion between Tuđman and Milošević to attack and partition Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet there was no press release announcing a plan to do so, there seems to be no record of the meeting, and both men denied this was the case.<sup>51</sup> There are second-hand accounts, but lacking a documentary record, can individual

---

<sup>49</sup> McClelland, *Causal Explanation and Model Building*, pp. 21B5, 31B57, 62B3, 113B115, 159B60; also Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History*, p. 103. Causal explanations are probable because reality must be abstracted to organize it into the homogeneous sets necessary to precise causal generalizations. Actual causes are not the sum of all possible relevant causes, because it is impossible to list all possible antecedent conditions.

<sup>50</sup> Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History* p. 133; Weinryb, *Alf We Write Novels*, pp. 269, 272B9, and Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp. 106, 109B111, 231B3, for the observation that *Aprevailing linguistic or nonlinguistic factors* decide the form and reproduction of past history, and Koselleck, *Linguistic Change and the history of Events, Journal of Modern History* (1989), pp. 665B6, for his three stages of writing history. *Anschreiben* (writing down) gives precedence to new linguistic forms and concrete events over earlier forms and events; *Aufschreiben* (copying) occurs if earlier histories are not opposed to latter ones; and *Abschreiben* (revising) consists in a critical questioning and revision of what was first written. Regarding the 1990s, we appear to be in the second stage, having not yet begun to question and revise what was written earlier.

<sup>51</sup> Four years later, Tuđman drew a map on a menu for Paddy Ashdown, leading Stephen Engelberg, *New York Times*, 8 August 1995, to report that Tuđman and Milošević Adiscussed dividing Bosnia between them. But sketching a map to illustrate a point in 1995 is less than convincing proof that Tuđman conspired to attack and dismember Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1991. Josip Manolić told Tonko Vulić, *Globus*, 22 April 1994, that he believed Tuđman and Milošević had agreed to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina at Karađorđevo, but could not document his assertion, because Tuđman never, not even with his closest collaborators, spoke openly about what had been decided with Slobodan Milošević, save for some allusion to these conversations.

(or collective) memories be trusted? Would, for example, testimony from Milošević be more credible than evidence from Manolić or Mesić?

Memory is notoriously untrustworthy, and even a confession may be false.<sup>52</sup> Faulty memories, false confessions, and misleading appearances have been popular subjects for film, from Kurosawa's *Rashomon* to Alfred Hitchcock's *I Confess* and Stephen Hopkins' *Under Suspicion*, but it is worth underscoring the skepticism with which we should approach confessions and testimony when all that exists is hearsay and circumstantial evidence. Yet for some, the very fact of the meeting has been enough to convict. Can interesting, and very unhistorical, way to assess a historical event.

Certain questions seem obvious. For example, if Tuđman met with Milošević in March 1991 and agreed to partition Bosnia by force, but Serbian forces then attacked, occupied, and cleansed a third of Croatia a few months later, is it still credible that the two men *continued* to collude?<sup>53</sup> Were the Serbs talking to Izetbegović at the same time? If so, what were they saying? Was Tuđman telling the truth when he told Mesić that he had saved Croatia from war? If so, then it would appear that he wanted to avoid a war, not start one. Or did Tuđman mean that he had spared Croatia at the expense of Bosnia? If Tuđman connived with Milošević in 1992 or 1993, is there documentary evidence linking later events to the meeting at Karadžević? If so, does the different context change the nature of Tuđman's actions? To what extent did the pressures of war and the attitudes and actions of the international community-and Tuđman's perceptions of both-shape his attitudes and guide his actions? (This is a crucial question, given the role played by the international community and given that historically war has changed attitudes and distorted politics, e.g., during the Great War all economies came under government

<sup>52</sup> For example, the recent revelation that the young men who confessed to raping and beating a jogger in New York's Central Park may be innocent. The *New York Times*, 1 December 2002, for a reconstruction of the events of that night in Central Park, using exacting chronologies and a dense, analytic narrative.

<sup>53</sup> Perhaps, especially if Tuđman was a fool or was deluding himself. After all, Stalin and Hitler had divided up Poland in 1939, and Stalin apparently convinced himself that he could deal with Hitler, a delusion dissipated by the German attack on the USSR. This is a tempting, but fallacious analogy, since it would only work if Tuđman and Milošević had sliced and diced Bosnia before the Serbs attacked Croatia. In fact, the Serbs in the Krajina had already set up SARs by March 1991, and the Serbs had already moved Mladić to Knin and begun to shuffle JNA units. It is counterintuitive to suppose that even if a deal had been struck, it would have endured. Meetings are always difficult to assess and appearances can deceive, e.g., before they attacked Poland, the Germans met with the Italians. But rather than plotting aggressive warfare, the Italians had warned that they would not be ready to fight until after 1942, leading to German promises in May to refrain from any actions that would lead to war until then. Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943* (ed., Hugh Gibson) (New York, 1946), 23 Dec. 1943, for the "cynical German determination to provoke" war in 1939 and Mario Luciolli, *Palazzo Chigi: anni roventi. Ricordi di vita diplomatica italiana dal 1933 al 1948* (Milan, 1978), pp. 68-71, for Ciano's remark in August 1939 that, "La guerra a fianco di questi mascazzoni non la faremmo mai." Also *I documenti diplomatici italiani*, Series 8, volume 13, documents 1, 4, 21, 27, 36, 129, 130, and 250, for Mussolini's warnings to Hitler that an attack on Poland would trigger an European war which Italy could neither approve nor join.

control, reverting to *laissez-faire* policies after 1918; and FDR went from opposing censorship and the bombing of cities during the Spanish Civil War to being a staunch supporter of both during World War II.) Did discussions in 1991 to partition Bosnia in the event Yugoslavia disintegrated constitute aggression or was Tuđman trying to find a diplomatic way to resolve a political problem, as Maček had done in 1939?<sup>54</sup> (This is also an important question, since Tuđman's actions within an intact Yugoslavia occurred in a different context than his actions after Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were recognized as independent states).<sup>55</sup>

How one appraises Tuđman's meeting with Milošević at Karađorđevo and Croatia's involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina depends on whether one seeks to judge, adopting a moral or a legal matrix to evaluate these events, or to understand, trying to place both events in a larger and more open-ended historical framework.<sup>56</sup> One can, of course, always censure the behavior of participants after one understands the event in question. Tuđman himself seems to have believed he was pursuing a Realpolitik which defined Bosnia-Herzegovina as vital to Croatia's security. "One needs to be clear," he told one interviewer, "that in Bosnia-Herzegovina a battle is being fought for the strategic security of the Croatian state in the future."<sup>57</sup> Because he saw himself as the protector of Bosnia's Croats, an idealist and nationalist position, Tuđman appears to have created Herceg-Bosna both as a buffer for Dalmatia and as a political entity intended to guarantee the "demographic survival" of Bosnia's Croats.<sup>58</sup> In short, he appears to have been a hard-nosed romantic nationalist.

---

<sup>54</sup> Špegelj believes Tuđman divided Bosnia with Milošević, but he also complains that Tuđman preferred diplomacy to stockpiling weapons, apparently reflecting Tuđman's preference for diplomatic and political solutions. Like Tus, Špegelj considers Croatia too weak to attack anyone in the spring of 1991. See *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, pp. 14B66; and Martin Špegelj, "The Disposition of Former Yugoslavia's Military in the Northwest Theater on the Even of the Conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia," *Journal of Croatian Studies* (1991-92). Tus thinks Tuđman blocked an HV attack to relieve Vukovar in October 1991 under pressure from the EC and believes he was foolish to trust the UN, observations that would indicate Tuđman's susceptibility to outside pressure and confirm his preference for political solutions.

<sup>55</sup> For example, the HDZ branch in Bosnia-Herzegovina could still be viewed as part of a national (Yugoslav) party in 1991, but not in 1992.

<sup>56</sup> To arrive at the conclusion that the meeting at Karađorđevo was a defining event, one needs to conflate chronology and suspend logic. Does this mean that Tuđman was not a bad man who tried to strike a deal with Milošević? No. It simply means that before we reach a definite conclusion about this meeting, we have to bear in mind that it has served since its occurrence as a tool for advocates of particular positions to argue that Tuđman was as bad as Milošević. But historically, before we can judge, we must first determine what occurred, suspending judgment until we do. Even then, we may, again, get little more than a mid-level generalization.

<sup>57</sup> Ante Gugo, Državna se politika ne vodi srcem, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 15 Sept. 1993.

<sup>58</sup> Tuđman dismissed rumors he planned to partition Bosnia with the Serbs, noting that both Muslims and Croats were victims of a genocidal war of conquest by Serbia, Montenegro and the former JNA. He stressed Croatia's quick recognition and support of Bosnia and its sheltering of Bosnian refugees; but qualified his support for a Bosnian state to one of three constituent peoples, not for a centralized, unitary Bosnia. *Večernji list*, 30 July 1999.



There is abundant evidence that Tuđman would have liked to incorporate large chunks of Bosnia-Herzegovina into a Croatian state and did what he could to do so.<sup>59</sup> But did Tuđman, the HDZ, and Croatia's military and civilian leaders conspire to absorb Croatian areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina by waging aggressive war in collusion with Serbia or did they simply take advantage of a chaotic situation to the extent they could. Were they war criminals, opportunists, patriots, revolutionaries, or something else altogether?

Tuđman repeatedly insisted that at Karađorđevo he had sought not to dismember Bosnia-Herzegovina, but to avoid war. At times, he even seemed to have seen himself as a benefactor of a recalcitrant and ungrateful Bosnian government.<sup>60</sup> Was Tuđman telling the truth or deluding himself? Stipe Mesić recalled that Tuđman returned from the meeting "enthusiastic" (oduševljen) because he believed he had avoided war by agreeing to redraw the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, an action he considered acceptable to both Russia and the West.<sup>61</sup> A Croatian "negotiating team" subsequently discussed partitioning Bosnia-Herzegovina with the Serbs, and Slaven Letica criticized Tuđman for both having invited the Serbs to "cross the Drina" and having tacitly acknowledged the right of Croatia's Serbs to redraw Croatia's borders.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Evidence that Tuđman had predatory designs on Bosnia-Herzegovina, includes excerpts from his written works, interviews, and press conferences; indications, including the presence of HV (Croatian Army) units in Herzegovina, that Zagreb covertly aided Bosnia's Croats during their struggle with the Bosnian government; the HV's occupation of Western Slavonia and Krajina in 1995; charges by former colleagues, including Stipe Mesić and Stjepan Kljuić; and meetings with Milošević, especially their March 1991 encounter at Karađorđevo. Tuđman certainly discussed carving up Bosnia-Herzegovina with Milošević and with the HDZ BiH.

<sup>60</sup> In *Glas Istre*, 31 Oct 1992, Tuđman noted that Croatia had taken in thousands of Muslim refugees and helped Bosnia obtain arms. Noting that cooperation was in the long-term strategic interest of both Croats and Muslims, Tuđman warned that Croats would only accept a Bosnia of three equal and sovereign peoples because they had painful memories of having been a *second-class people* in Yugoslavia. For similar views, *Glasnik*, 24 Aug. 1990, and Perica Jukić to Ivica Profaća, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 31 August 1993. In *Danas*, 26 October 1993, Tuđman complained that the Muslims had scuttled efforts to cooperate by trying to redress their losses to the Serbs by appropriating Mostar, once capital of the Croatian Banovina and a city Tuđman saw playing a similar role under the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan. Stipe Mesić told Alen Anić of *Vreme International*, 10 April 1995, that Tuđman had instructed Bosnia's Croats to vote for the creation of a Bosnian state in 1991.

<sup>61</sup> Mesić suggested the meeting at Karađorđevo after Tuđman and Milošević failed to resolve their differences at an earlier meeting initiated by the Serbian leader. Mesić guessed that as a result of their deal in 1991, in 1995 Milošević refused to aid the Croatian Serbs whom he had earlier armed and incited against the Croatian government. Stipe Mesić to Robert Bajrušić, *Nacional*, 10 March 1999. Mesić told *Ljiljan*, 11 October 1995, that after the meeting Tuđman said Milošević had no interest in Croatia, adding that *if Bosnia could not hold together, then Croatia would insist on the Banovina borders*. Tuđman told Darko Hudelist, *Globus*, 22 Nov. 1996, that the Banovina had been a giant step in the resolution of the Croatian question.

<sup>62</sup> Slaven Letica, *Obećana zemlja. Politički antimemoari* (Rijeka: Biblioteka Ex Ungue Leonem, 1992), pp. 245-6. The Croats in the *negotiating group* were Dušan Bilandžić, Josip Šentija, Smiljko Sokol, and Zvonko Lerotić.

So it seems that Milošević and Tuđman discussed redrawing borders. But did they conspire to wage war on Bosnia-Herzegovina?<sup>63</sup> Serbian actions suggest that Tuđman misunderstood or was misled by Milošević, who warned on March 28 that if the other republics pressed for confederation, he would expand Serbia's boundaries to encompass all of Yugoslavia's Serbs. Serbia had already altered federal borders when it had absorbed Vojvodina and Kosova, and on March 31, Jović ordered the JNA to occupy Croatia's Plitvice National Park to support Serbian paramilitary units from Krajina in their battles with Croatian police, despite protests by both the Croatian and Slovenian governments.<sup>64</sup> These hardly seem the actions of co-conspirators, and it is in the context of Serbian threats and actions that the maneuvers of Tuđman and the HDZ during the spring and summer of 1991 should be understood.

Because my intent is to raise questions about how we approach events, not to offer definitive answers, let me stop here. Rather than mid-level generalizations about events at Stupni Do and the meeting at Karađorđevo, I would like to offer some tentative conclusions regarding how we might approach conflict and the breakup of Yugoslavia.

First, judgements about events by contemporaries are not historical analyses and need to be greeted with skepticism, then carefully assessed against all available evidence.

Second, moral and legal judgments are moral and legal judgments, not historical assessments, even if historical evidence is basic to both of the former.

Third, words and concepts not only have different meanings to different people, using them carelessly invites error and using them at all invites misunderstanding.<sup>65</sup>

Fourth, models simulate reality, but they are abstractions, not literal replications of reality, and tend only to work within the confines of a particular paradigm. While an empirical approach may seem old-fashioned, confusing the abstract with the concrete and concepts with reality offers only the illusion of understanding. Unless grounded on good historical studies, theories and models can mislead rather than instruct, proving no better guides to action than the histories and data on which they rest.

---

<sup>63</sup> Hans Sterken, *Danas*, 19 November 1991, thought Tuđman failed to appreciate the ramifications for Croatia of violating the principle of the inviolability of borders.

<sup>64</sup> Branka Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia. Tacking the Break-up 1980-92* (New York: Verso, 1993), pp. 283-4, and 293-4, for a chronology of the Serbian strategy of destabilization in early 1991. During March and April, Bosnia's Serb set up three new SARs and refused to recognize the authority of the Bosnian government in Sarajevo, actions most interpreted as a prelude to annexation to Serbia.

<sup>65</sup> As Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp. 262, 264, reminds us, concepts guide and control understanding and their internal temporal structure allows an opponent to be ideologically stigmatized. Concepts, like words, change meaning over time and from place to place. Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People. French Popular Protest, 1789-1820* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. xvi-xvi, notes that in revolutionary situations and those characterized by popular violence, sources are suspect and events and their descriptions can mislead, e.g., during the 1790s, definitions of terroriser and what constituted terror and counter-terror varied with France's *electoral geography*. Yugoslavia's dissolution presented as revolutionary and violent a landscape as did revolutionary France.

Finally, approaching reality through abstractions seems at best a futile exercise. For example, whatever the causes of the Yugoslav wars, the effort of a dissatisfied and frustrated Croatism to realize its ideal by destroying the state created by a content and complacent Yugoslavism was certainly not one of them, unless one believes that disembodied abstractions are historical actors.<sup>66</sup>

We can understand conflict in many ways, but understanding begins with as accurate a reconstruction of events as possible, and the discipline best suited to do this is history. So we are left with dense description, painstaking chronology, careful use of words, skepticism regarding our sources, and time to reflect as crucial tools in reconstructing reality, even if all they yield is another mid-level generalization. Mid-level generalizations and tentative conclusions may not satisfy those who crave certainty, but as Pierre Bayle noted long ago, we must live with degrees of certainty, because they are all we can know for sure.

---

<sup>66</sup> Jean E. Manas, *The Impossible Trade-off: Peace versus Justice*, in Richard H. Ullman, ed., *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), esp. p. 47, 51B6, believes the distinction between Yugoslavism and Croatianism...boils down to the fact that Yugoslavism (or Bosnianism) had...attained its ideal of a state, while its adversary [Serbism or Croatism] had not. Eschewing historical analysis, Manas measures actions against concepts like multiculturalism, an approach that ends in banal conundrums, e.g., while a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia might disadvantage Croat identity, a Croatian state would disadvantage Serb identity. Unable to arrive at a conclusion, Manas suggests outside actors settle ethno-national strife not by embracing realism or *idealism*, but by steadfastly avoiding preconceptions and focusing all their energies on vindicating fundamental norms, even though such norms are themselves subject to disputation and the tension between peace and justice will remain.

